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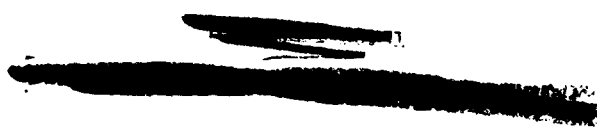
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FROM THE PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN THE
STRUGGLE WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES (1920--1930)

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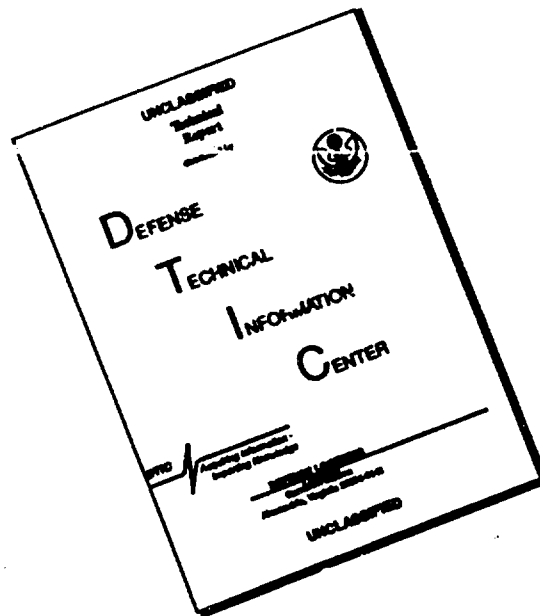
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FROM THE PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN THE
STRUGGLE WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES (1920--1930)

[Following is the translation of an article by I. V. Vengrova, Institute for the Organization of Public Health and the History of Medicine imeni N. A. Semashko, published in the Russian-language periodical Zhurnal Mikrobiologii, Epidemiologii i Immunobiologii (Journal of Microbiology, Epidemiology and Immunobiology), #6, 1965, pages 150--154. It was submitted on 1 Feb 1964. Translation performed by Sp/7 Charles T. Ostertag, Jr.]

Epidemic diseases, which have a tendency to encompass many countries, presented an event of international importance long ago, and required the adoption of measures which went beyond the limits of one government. In connection with this the necessity for international collaboration arose. The Soviet government, which proclaimed the principle of peace between nations from the first days of its existence, promoted international collaboration in all the areas of culture and science. One of these areas was the struggle with infectious diseases.

N. A. Semashko gave a wonderful definition of international collaboration in science. He wrote, "Science is international. From the national sources of separate countries emanates the scientific data so that by means of comparisons, conversion, criticism, thorough study and additions, those indisputable scientific facts are crystallized which make up the scientific treasure house of mankind."*

*Russian-German Medical Journal, 1925, 1, page 1.

The Civil War disrupted the scientific and cultural collaboration between Russia and other countries. This collaboration had a deep tradition in the pre-revolutionary period. There was also an end to the sanitary-epidemiological relations which were established by the sanitary conventions at the end of the XIXth and beginning of the XXth centuries. Apart from the war, this break furthered the fact that the scientific medical world of foreign countries was found to a significant degree under the influences of reactionary forces, which had taken up arms against the Soviet Union, and considered it a wild, barbarian, uncultured, illiterate country which prosecuted doctors and abolished medicine.

Soviet doctors, who struggled with epidemics in Russia under serious conditions of starvation and devastation, remember especially well the necessity for the reactivation of international collaboration in this affair

and the utilization of the experience of other countries. Appearing at the 1st All Russian Congress of Medico-Sanitary Departments of Soviets in 1918, A. N. Sysin stressed that it was necessary to carry out measures for the liquidation of epidemics, taking into consideration the experience of the public struggle with epidemics in Europe and the scientific data of modern epidemiology. This provision of A. N. Sysin's report found expression in the setting up of a congress for the "organization of the struggle with epidemics under the conditions of the Soviet Republic."

In the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 at Narkomzdrav (People's Commissariat of Public Health) a special department of foreign information was created. It was headed by Doctor I. P. Kalina. The immediate mission of the department was the selection and preparation for placement in the Russian and foreign press of articles based on the various problems of public health in Soviet Russia, that is, it would serve as an intermediary between the Russian and foreign representatives of medical science. At Narkomzdrav it was possible to gradually link up with the countries of Europe, and then in America, and to puncture the impenetrable wall of distrust toward Soviet medicine, and even to arouse the interest of the Western European medical world towards it. The establishment of international medical ties was important also because it preceded and promoted the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet government and many countries.

One of the first steps in the resumption of international ties in the area of combatting infectious diseases was Russia's participation in the international sanitary conferences on combatting epidemics of especially dangerous infectious diseases.

Before the Revolution the sanitary-epidemiological relations of Russia with other countries were specified mainly by the Paris Sanitary Convention of 17 January 1912. This convention established the mutual obligations for the governments in the case of the appearance on their territory of epidemics of cholera, plague and yellow fever.

The European Sanitary Conference in Warsaw (March 1922) was the first international conference in which Russia participated following the war and revolution. It was made up of the representatives of 26 countries. From the RSFSR, I. P. Kalina took part in it. The mission of the conference was elucidation of problems connected with the struggle with epidemics in the countries of Eastern Europe and a clarification of measures for international mutual help in this matter.

Over the 10-year period which passed from the time of the signing of the Paris Convention (1912--1922), there were changes in the borders of many countries. There was a change in the concept of the etiology and essence of certain infectious diseases, and there was a change in the epidemic status of the countries of Europe. Considering all this, the delegation at

Narkomzdrav proposed its own system of agreements between countries, direct neighbors, in place of the single convention. Our plan of a sanitary convention with Poland, which was signed not long before the Warsaw Conference and which stemmed from the Paris Convention of 1912, turned out to be the most complete and was almost completely taken into consideration in the general foundations.

Already in the instance of this first international sanitary conference with the participation of Soviet Russia it was apparent that international sanitary-epidemiological measures could not be carried out in Europe without the participation of the Soviet government.

Another conference where the USSR played an important progressive role was the International Sanitary Conference in Paris (10 May--10 June 1926). The delegation from the Soviet Union was headed by the People's Commissar for Public Health, N. A. Semashko. It also included Doctors N. G. Freyberg*, A. N. Sysin, Representative of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and others.

*Nikolay Gustavovich Freyberg (1859--1927) -- leading pre-revolution specialist on medical-sanitary and international sanitary legislation. Following the October Revolution he became one of the organizers of Soviet Public Health. The successes of the Soviet Delegation at the first international sanitary conferences with the participation of Soviet Russia were indebted to a significant degree to his knowledge and authority.

The aim of the conference was a review of the Paris International Sanitary Convention of 1912. Two basic problems were subjected to discussion at the Conference: General provisions and the requirements and practice of the eastern countries. In the course of the conference the inclination developed for the USA and England to change the international sanitary-epidemiological work into an arena for political struggle, in particular against the USSR, and into a means for intervention in the internal affairs of different countries.

Reflected in this struggle were differences connected with the inclusion in the convention of new diseases -- typhus and smallpox. In a counter-balance to the demand of the USA and Japan concerning the compulsory reporting of the first cases of smallpox and typhus (similar to plague and cholera), the Soviet Delegation strived to have included in the resolution the point that measures of international agreement should be carried out only following the development of these diseases.

In countering the USA and England, the Soviet Delegation also clarified the maximum guarantee of freedom in international sanitary-epidemiological relations from inconvenient administrative measures which are not brought about by the actual interests of international sanitary protection and demanded the abolition of the limited "eastern" regulation, based on the idea of the servile and subordinate position of the countries of the East.

The victory of the USSR delegation at this conference was that it clarified the independence and central role of the oldest international organ for sanitary problems -- The International Bureau for Public Hygiene (MBOG). The delegations of England and other countries strived to limit the scope of activity of this bureau, having given up many of its functions to the Organization of Hygiene of the League of Nations, which was created in 1923 and where these countries occupied the governing position. The Soviet Union was not then a member of the League of Nations and maintained communications with its Organization of Hygiene only in respect to individual problems based on special agreements, since Russia was a member of the Bureau since the time of its founding in 1907.

On the whole the Sanitary Conference of 1926 brought into the international Sanitary Convention certain improvements connected with successes in science and practice. Being accepted at the conference, the International Sanitary Convention was concerned with the 6 most dangerous diseases, plague, cholera, smallpox, typhus, typhoid, and yellow fever. However, at the convention an attempt was made by the USA and England to turn the sanitary-epidemiological operation into an arena for a political struggle, and this strongly interfered with the achievement of international harmony in the struggle with infectious diseases. At the same time the Conference demonstrated the role of the Soviet Government as the supporter of justice and equality in the carrying out of sanitary-epidemiological measures - a principle to which the USSR still holds at the present time.

As was pointed out, the oldest organ of solidarity of separate governments in the joint struggle for the people's health was the International Bureau for Public Hygiene. The war and the revolution temporarily curtailed the participation of Russia in this organization, however it resumed in 1926 and from this time a representative of the USSR has participated in the work of the yearly sessions of the Bureau.

Problems of combatting infectious diseases occupied the main place at these sessions. The Bureau centralizes all information concerning infectious diseases. Reports have been presented at the sessions by the following Soviet scientists: A. N. Sysin (permanent representative), S. M. Nikanorov, Ye. I. Martsinovskiy, and others.

The participation of Soviet Russia in the International Bureau for Public Health guaranteed the exchange of scientific and practical knowledge in the struggle with such dangerous diseases as cholera, plague, smallpox, and typhus. Besides this, the participation of delegates of the USSR, who elucidated the successes in combatting infectious diseases in Russia, promoted the spreading of the truth concerning the Soviet Union, and displayed the first socialist country as a country which places the problem of protecting the people's health in first place.

Problems of combatting infectious diseases were also handled by the Organization of Hygiene of the League of Nations. Soviet Russia took part in the work of this organization but was not a permanent member. This section of the League of Nations helped in the organization of measures for the liquidation of epidemics in various countries, convened exchange courses for sanitary doctors, published informational literature, etc.

Individual commissions worked on various problems in the Organization of Hygiene. In addition to the Permanent Committee, the Organization had a number of specialist-experts from many countries. One of the largest commissions was the Commission for Combatting Malaria which was created in 1924. Professor Ye. I. Martsinovskiy was the expert from the USSR on it. In 1924 this Commission worked in the Soviet Union. It included Western European scientists and prominent specialists (13 men) on malaria, which is widely distributed in a number of regions of Russia, thus making the struggle with it one of the most important missions. The Commission was headed by Professor B. Hokht, Director of the Tropical Institute in Hamburg. Included from the Soviet Union on the Commission were Professor Ye. I. Martsinovskiy, Doctor I. A. Dobreytser, the representative from Markomzdrav, Doctor I. P. Kalin, and others.

The Commission visited around 20 cities and populated points in the country. In Kharkov the foreign scientists visited the Sanitary-Epidemiological Institute and became acquainted with the work of the Protozoological Institute and the new method for treating malaria which was proposed by Professor Rubashkin, Director of this Institute. In the example of these two institutes the foreign specialists saw that in the Soviet country a great deal of scientific work is being carried out.

In Saratov the Commission visited the Microbiological Institute. Its main attention was attracted to the work of the Institute in respect to plague. Professor S. M. Nikanorov acquainted the Commission with this work. In a number of places the members of the Commission became acquainted with antimalarial work in rural areas.

Upon returning to Moscow the Commission discussed the following problems during their meetings: The program of courses for malariologists, developing an uniform nomenclature for malarial forms, prophylactic quinine treatment as a method for combatting malaria, methods and paths of scientific investigations as the foundation for the struggle with malaria. The main reports of the foreign scientists, members of the Commission, were published in Issue No 5 of the journal "Hygiene and Epidemiology" for 1924.

In summing up the trip, the president of the Commission, Professor B. Hokht, said: "We saw how much has been done for the organization of medical service and in the struggle with malaria. We, representatives of science, are very regretful of the break between Western Europe and you. We will be very fortunate if we can create something for establishing the necessary accord." And further, "In Russia we found a well organized medical-sanitary organization."

The arrival of the International Malaria Commission in Soviet Russia made it possible for the greatest Western European specialists on malaria and the Soviet scientists to exchange experience and scientific achievements in the area of combatting malaria. The foreign scientists were able to become acquainted with forms of medical-sanitary organization which were completely new for them and to see that in Russia a great scientific work was being carried out in the struggle with malaria. The stay of the Commission in the USSR also had a great cultural-political significance, since the scientists became acquainted with the life of the Soviet country, about which up until this time they had either a very vague or wrong concept.

The courses for sanitary doctors which were organized by the League of Nations furthered the Association of International Forces in the Struggle with Infectious Diseases. Their participants, and there were many leading Soviet scientists (A. N. Sysin, S. M. Nikanorov, S. I. Slonevskiy, A. N. Marzeyev, P. G. Sergiev, A. I. Dobreytser, and others), were able to learn in detail the organization of work in the area of public health in those countries, where courses were covered, literature was exchanged on problems which interested them, and scientific ties were made. Sometimes there was an exchange of instructors at such courses. Thus, at the courses on the preparation of sanitary doctors and epidemiologists which were held in 1922-1923 in Moscow and Kharkov, the course of lectures was read by the German hygienist Professor Abel, and in Warsaw -- by Professor Barykin.

Thus, the Organization of Hygiene of the League of Nations and other similar organizations, which were created in the 20's, undertook mainly the struggle with acutely infectious epidemic diseases. Undoubtedly they helped the unification of efforts of many countries in the carrying out of measures in the struggle with epidemics, however a huge interference in their work were the political moments which were brought in to the sanitary-epidemiological work by England, the USA and other countries. Having this in mind, A. N. Sysin wrote: "It is not necessary to exaggerate the importance of all these associations and their work. Here it may be that the idea of international cooperation is more important than practical results. Political class and other influences and effects preserve their force here to a full measure and it would be naive and careless to dream of the neutrality of work and the activity of all the above stated organizations."*

*Izvestiya Narkomzdrava, 1923, 4--5, page 54.

A huge role in the unification of forces of the Soviet and foreign specialists in the area of combatting infectious diseases was played by the International Microbiological Society which was created in 1927. Soviet scientists took an active part in its organization. Among its member-founders were the famous Soviet scientists S. I. Zlatogorov and D. K. Zabolotnyy. In the Soviet National Committee of the Society were N. F. Gamaleya, Ye. I. Martsinovskiy, D. K. Zabolotnyy, and others. This organization furthered the meeting and carrying out of the international microbiological congresses in which Soviet specialists took part in the 20--30's.

A positive example of international scientific cooperation was the conference dealing with separate infectious diseases.

The most interesting example of such a conference was the German-Russian Congress on scarlet fever, which was convened in Kenigsberg in June 1928. Taking part in this were dozens of specialists, not only from Germany and the Soviet Union, but also from the Baltic countries, Hungary and Poland. The Soviet delegation included Professors S. V. Korshun, S. I. Zlatogorov, G. A. Ivashentsov, G. D. Belonovskiy and others (all told 13 men). Representatives of Russia were in the organizational committee of the Congress and its Presidium.

The main attention of the Congress was devoted to the etiology, epidemiology, treatment, and prophylaxis of scarlet fever. The Russian works on scarlet fever made up a noticeable part among the reports both in quantity and in trend and thought. The Russian scientists shared their experience and observations. Many various points of view were expressed by both the Russian and foreign scientists concerning the etiology of scarlet fever. The main attention of the Congress was devoted to the report of Professor G. A. Ivashentsov, in which he for the first time presented the theoretical foundations for the subdural administration of specific serum (on the basis of experiments, conducted jointly with A. D. Speranskiy). For the majority of the participants the thought was new concerning the participation of the central nervous system in the origin of the symptom complex of scarlet fever and of the possibility of curing scarlet fever with the help of the subdural administration of small doses of medicinal serum. The work of the German-Russian Congress on scarlet fever ran into a deep scientific controversy. The achievements of the Russian epidemiologists in the study of scarlet fever and the struggle with it were noted by the Congress.

At the same time the Congress played a great role in the cultural ties between Germany and the Soviet Union.

An example of scientific collaboration between Soviet and French scientists was the First French-Soviet Week of Microbiologists, organized in Moscow on 26--30 March 1937. The program for the "Week" concerned problems which represented the most urgent scientific and practical interest (inoculations against tetanus and diphtheria with the appropriate Ramon anatoxins, rationalization of immunization methods, protective inoculations against typhus and oral vaccination against dysentery according to the method of Bezredka).

Meetings of the Conference were held in the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine imeni A. M. Gorkogo. Taking part for the Soviets were the most prominent microbiologists and active members from the largest microbiological institutes. The French delegation included Professors A. M. Bezredka, M. Lisbon, Mashbef and others.

The reports of the Soviet scientists dealt with a number of major achievements. Professor P. F. Zdrodovskiy summed up the work on the immunization and re-immunization of monkeys with tetanus anatoxin with a prolonged observation, which supported the data of the prominent French scientist G. Ramon concerning the high immunizing capability of the tetanus anatoxin, and at the same time reported the necessity of applying primary immunization in combination with re-immunization. There was great interest in the communication by the Soviet scientist M. K. Yatsimirskaya-Krontovskaya concerning preventive inoculations against typhus. The vaccine of M. K. Yatsimirskaya-Krontovskaya possessed significant advantages in comparison with the French vaccine, and this was of great importance in the struggle with typhus. A member of the French delegation, the great specialist on brucellosis, Professor M. Lisbon, presented a communication on the treatment of brucellosis in humans. The Soviet scientists presented the problems concerning the struggle with brucellosis in an exhibit reflecting the work of the special expedition of the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine. A particularly great impression was made by the huge scale of the operation and the results of the experimental sanitation of infected herds based on the method developed by the expedition. Professor M. Lisbon qualified this investigation "...as unique in a world experiment," and insistently recommended the publication of the works of the expedition in the French and English languages. ***

***Sovetskaya Meditsina (Soviet Medicine), 1937, 1, page 55.

The famous Soviet scientist P. F. Zdrodovskiy noted in an article dealing with the "week": "The conference as the first test of an encounter and drawing together of French and Soviet microbiologists went very successfully and was of doubtless advantage for both sides. It remains to hope that the established bonds grow still stronger, by accepting a systematic nature of reciprocal meetings and the live exchange of scientific experience."

****Sovetskaya Meditsina (Soviet Medicine), 1937, 1, page 56.

Thus, a study of the history of Soviet Russia's international medical ties in the 20--30's shows that the Soviet government from the first years of its existence actively promoted international collaboration in all the areas of science and culture, and primarily in the struggle with infectious diseases. Soviet doctors, to whose lot fell the organization of the struggle with epidemics in the difficult post war time and in the years of the Civil War, understand well and constantly stress the necessity for the most rapid restoration of international medical ties. Adjustment of these ties, which were interrupted by the war and the revolution, required a great deal of attention on the part of Narkomzdrav and the First People's Commissar for Public Health N. A. Semashko.

Visits by foreign specialists to Soviet Russia for scientific purposes, the participation of Soviet scientists in international congresses and meetings, and their addresses showed the foreign scientific world that

serious scientific investigations are being carried on in the USSR and that there have been many achievements. Simultaneously these reciprocal ties served as a means of becoming acquainted with the cultural and political lives of the first socialist country and as a means of exposing the lies and slanders and spreading the truth concerning the Soviet Union.

A study of the experience of international cooperation in the 20--30's makes it possible to see the great merit in this area of such prominent Soviet scientists as N. A. Semashko, A. N. Sysin, Ye. I. Martsinovskiy, L. A. Tarasevich, S. I. Zlatogorov, D. K. Zabolotnyy, S. V. Korshun, I. A. Dobreytser, and others, who, having continued the progressive traditions of the advanced native medical men of the past, created the basis for the extensive international exchange of experience and achievements in the area of combatting infectious diseases. At the present time without the USSR no one large problem of international public health could be resolved.